

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Lagoon Flying Scooter

other names/site number Flying Aces, Flying Jets

## 2. Location

street & number 375 N. Lagoon Drive ☐ not for publication

city or town Farmington ☐ vicinity

state Utah code UT county Davis code 011 zip code 84025

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination    request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets    does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

X national    statewide    local

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Utah Division of State History / Historic Preservation Office  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property    meets    does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

## 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

   entered in the National Register    determined eligible for the National Register

   determined not eligible for the National Register    removed from the National Register

   other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

**Lagoon Flying Scooter**

Name of Property

**Davis County, Utah**

County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- |                                     |                  |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | private          |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | public - Local   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | public - State   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | public - Federal |

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

- |                                     |             |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | building(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | district    |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | site        |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | structure   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | object      |

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing
	buildings
	district
	site
1	structure
	object
1	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Historic Resources of the  
Lagoon Amusement Park, 1886 — 1976

**Number of contributing resources previously  
listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

**RECREATION AND CULTURE:**

amusement park ride

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

**RECREATION AND CULTURE:**

amusement park ride

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER: Flying Scooter Ride

NO STYLE

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: CONCRETE

walls: N/A

roof: N/A

other: STEEL, IRON, WOOD, FIBERGLASS

**Lagoon Flying Scooter**

Name of Property

**Davis County, Utah**

County and State

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**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

**Summary Paragraph**

The Lagoon Flying Scooter, currently known as the Flying Aces, is an amusement park ride built by the Bisch-Rocco Amusement Company and installed at the Lagoon Amusement Park in Farmington, Davis County, Utah in 1941. It is one of only twelve examples of the historic ride still operating today. The ride consists of ten scooter cars attached by cables to a steel support tower and boom system. The Lagoon Flying Scooter is one of two examples that rotate clockwise. The ride has been in four different locations within the park, but because it was designed for disassembly, minor location shifts within the park do not affect its historic integrity. The period of significance extends from the original installation in 1941 to 1962, which spans its first and second locations within the park. The historic period includes the in-kind replacement of the original scooter cars with the current assembly, also built by the Bisch-Rocco company, which has been the only major modification to the ride since its original construction. The Lagoon Flying Scooter meets the registration requirements of the Multiple Property Listing, *Historic Resources of the Lagoon Amusement Park, 1886-1976*, and is a contributing historic resource at the Lagoon Amusement Park in Utah.

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**Narrative Description**

*Site*

The Lagoon Flying Scooter lies within an area of 0.17 acres out of approximately 60 acres for the park.<sup>1</sup> The footprint of the stationary structure is relatively small at 50 feet in diameter, which means that the ride was easily relocated to make room for more substantial attractions as the park expanded. The Flying Scooter was originally installed in 1941 at the south end of the midway approximately 100 feet east of the present location of the carousel.<sup>2</sup> In 1956, the park opened a five-acre kiddie-ride area east of the carousel and north of the lagoon, so the Flying Scooter was moved approximately 200 feet southwest to a location south of the roller coaster loading station.<sup>3</sup> The ride remained south of the roller coaster until an outdoor amphitheatre was built at that location in 1982.<sup>4</sup> Between 1983 and 1985, the ride was refurbished during a three-year hiatus. It was reinstalled at the north end of the midway in 1986. In 1999, the ride was moved 100 feet southeast to its current location when the Rocket was built. At its current location, the ride sits in the center of an oval-shaped sectioned concrete pad installed in 1999 on a former area of lawn near the picnic pavilions. The oval pad is approximately 100 feet (north to south) by 85 feet (east to west). The pad is surrounded by a square-post wrought-iron fence (circa 1999). The entry and exit gates are located at the north end of the oval. There is a small awning to shade the gate keeper/ride operator (circa 2005).

*Structure*

In the center of the oval, the four corners of the pyramidal tower structure sit on double base-plates bolted to the concrete footings. The tapered section of the steel tower is approximately fourteen feet high with horizontal and diagonal bracing

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<sup>1</sup> This estimate is for the operating portion only and excludes the parking lot, campground, support areas, and undeveloped land owned by the park.

<sup>2</sup> This location is shown on the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Lagoon produced in 1950, the first map to include the Flying Scooter.

<sup>3</sup> A circa 1957 night-time photograph of the roller coaster station shows the Rock-O-Plane ride just to the south near the spot where the flying scooter appears on a 1969 update of the Sanborn map. The Rock-O-Plane had been moved to its current location by 1969.

<sup>4</sup> One source indicates the ride was moved south for the 1982 season ([www.lagoonisfunwebsite.com](http://www.lagoonisfunwebsite.com)).

**Lagoon Flying Scooter**

Name of Property

**Davis County, Utah**

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on the lower two-thirds. The main drive shaft extends from the motor box on the ground below the center of the structure to approximately five feet beyond the top of the tower. The current motor was manufactured by the Falk Corporation of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and is a circa 1985 replacement for the original motor. The change in rotation from counterclockwise to clockwise was made with the new motor. There is a separate electrical box under the south side of the tower.

This particular tower structure at Lagoon was described by Bisch-Rocco as a Park (or Stationary) Model. Four of the six operating park models have the tower partially or completely encased in mostly non-historic materials. Lagoon is one of only two with the tower structure completely exposed.<sup>5</sup> The Lagoon model has a shield-shaped sign mounted on the tower with the words "Flying Aces" facing the gate area (circa 1985). The steel truss booms are mounted on a circular flange attached to the drive shaft in the center of the tower structure. The vertically-mounted booms are modified half-scissor trusses with doubled lower chords evenly distributed around the shaft. The booms angle outward and upward at approximately thirty degrees. At the point where the upper and lower chords meet, the ride structure is approximately twenty-five feet tall. The structure, including tower, booms, and motor, is currently painted grey (circa 1985).

*Scooter Cars*

Each scooter car is suspended between the apexes of two booms by a redundant cable system. The car is divided into three separate parts (tub, rudder, and stabilizer) mounted on a vertically hanging frame of metal (currently painted black). The two-person cab, commonly called a tub, rests on a rail at the bottom of the rectangular frame.<sup>6</sup> There is a U-shaped opening facing the central tower and a molded plastic bench seat with a restraint belt. The floor of the tub is covered with a non-skid metal sheet. The top of the tub is open except at the front where a portion is covered to provide a protected knee/leg well. The scooter car assembly also includes a stationary stabilizer mounted vertically to the frame at the rear of the tub and a moveable rudder mounted to the front of the frame.<sup>7</sup> The rudder moves back and forth on a pivot. The rear half of the rudder overhangs the tub with a handle at the bottom, which allows the rider to alter the trajectory of the scooter car during the ride's operation.

Each scooter car is a circa 1962 replacement for the original car. The replacements were designed and manufactured by the Bisch-Rocco company of materials that were more durable than the original cars (metal and fiberglass vs. wood and canvas). When the scooter cars were most recently refurbished (circa 1985), each was christened for an early twentieth-century military biplane. The most recent repainting occurred in 2001-2002. Each scooter car has an individual color scheme that is the same on both the outward and inward faces of the car assembly. The Lagoon logo is printed on the tub on the outside opposite of the entry on the interior. The current names and colors are listed in a counter-clockwise order (no hierarchy intended) as follows:

1. *Gloster Gladiator* (orange & green vertical stripe with scalloped edges)
2. *Armstrong Whitworth Siskin* (silver with black & white checks; red, white & blue vertical stabilizer stripes)

<sup>5</sup> The other exposed tower operating model is the 10-tub park model at Knoebel's in Elyburg, Pennsylvania, which is coincidentally the only other flying scooter to rotate clockwise since a new motor was installed in 1973. The entry to the tubs for clockwise scooters is on the interior. The Fun Spot in Angola, Indiana, has a 10-tub park model with an exposed tower, but the park is closed and the ride is currently standing but not operating (SBNO). Another park model is in storage in the United Kingdom. The six other operating flying scooters are 8-tub portable models with a different tower design. All data on operating and defunct flying scooters cited in this nomination were gleaned from the flyingaddicts.com website and various amusement park websites.

<sup>6</sup> Alvin Bisch used the term "cab" in the patent for device. The term "car" was used in promotional material. The term "tub" is used in the flying scooter census and is the physically most apt description. The current tub holds two children or two small adults comfortably. It would be a bit snug for two adults of larger proportions. The original 1941 tubs were made of duramold and were more rounded.

<sup>7</sup> The stabilizer and rudder are known by various terms, including fins, sails, wings, etc. They were originally made of stretched canvas.

**Lagoon Flying Scooter**

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3. *Curtiss Falcon* (blue with white lettering; yellow & blue vertical stabilizer stripes, white & red horizontal stripes)
4. *Curtiss Helldiver* (orange & black with flame-painted stabilizer)
5. *Arvo* [sic] *Avro 504 Series* (red with white lettering; white & blue bull's-eye; red, white & blue stabilizer stripes)
6. *Fokker C.V.* (camouflage green & tan with red & white star on stabilizer)
7. *Vickers Vildebeast* (black on bottom; silver on top; with red dividing stripe & lettering)
8. *Nieuport Type 16* (yellow with blue & red bull's-eye; blue, yellow & red vertical stabilizer stripes)
9. *Curtiss Racer R-6* (black with stylized eagle; black, red, white & blue vertical stabilizer stripes)
10. *Swordfish MK1* (green, purple & white horizontal stripes with black lettering)

*Ride Experience*

The ride experience begins with the riders waiting at the entry gate while the previous ten to twenty riders dismount and exit through a separate gate. Riders are allowed to enter the gate and select their scooter cars on a first-come basis. Riders under the height of 46 inches must be accompanied by a responsible adult. The ride operator checks that the restraint belts are engaged for each one to two-passenger tub. As the ride begins, the scooter cars swing from the cables in a clockwise direction. As the speed of rotation increases, the cars lift as the centrifugal force pushes them outward. Riders move along the trajectory of the 300-foot perimeter circle for approximately two minutes at up to 30 miles per hour. Without controlling the rudder, the car will swing from side to side gently along its trajectory as it makes a circuit. Experienced riders prefer to control the rudder to make the scooter car swoop and dive within the constraints of the cable system. Flying scooter enthusiasts are known for “snapping” the cables, which refers to giving the cables some slack then snapping it back with a quick motion.<sup>88</sup> The ability to control at least of portion of the ride experience has kept the Flying Scooter ride popular since it's inception in the 1930s.

<sup>88</sup> The Flyer Addicts Anonymous website rates Flying Scooters for “snap-ability.” The Lagoon ride has not been rated. Snapping is prevented discouraged (by signage and staff) or (by design changes during refurbishment) in some amusement parks due to maintenance and safety concerns.

**Lagoon Flying Scooter**

Name of Property

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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ENGINEERING

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

INVENTION

**Period of Significance**

1941-1962

**Significant Dates**

1941, 1956, 1962

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Alvin Bisch, Designer & Engineer

Bisch-Rocco Amusement Company, Manufacturer

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance includes the original installation of the Flying Scooter at Lagoon in 1941 and the subsequent relocations and refurbishment up to 1962.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)** N/A

**Lagoon Flying Scooter**

Name of Property

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph**

(Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Lagoon Flying Scooter, installed at the Lagoon Amusement Park in 1941, is nationally significant under Criteria A and C for its association with the inventor, Alvin Bisch, and the manufacturer, the Bisch-Rocco Amusement Company. The Flying Scooter was an amusement park ride invented by Alvin Bisch in 1934 and produced by him and his partner, Ralph Rocco, between 1935 and the early 1960s, and sold to parks throughout the United States. The Flying Scooter was unique among amusement park rides of the period in that it provided the rider a means to change the trajectory of the ride with a pivoting rudder. This interactivity and control over the ride experience continues to be rare for the amusement ride industry even today and contributes to the ride's ongoing popularity. The ride is significant in the areas of Invention, Engineering, and Entertainment/Recreation. Currently there are only twelve extant Flying Scooters manufactured by the Bisch-Rocco Amusement Company in operation. The Lagoon Flying Scooter is the oldest example of the ride in continuous operation at the same park as its first installation. It retains its historic integrity in terms of location, design, association, and the historic ride experience. The Lagoon Flying Scooter is also significant under Criterion A for its association with the transformation of the Lagoon Amusement Park from a summer resort pleasure garden to a modern amusement park in the first half of the twentieth century. The ride meets the eligibility requirements of the Multiple Property Submission, *Historic Resources of the Lagoon Amusement Park, 1886— 1976* . The period of historic significance from 1941 to the 1962 reconstruction spans three contextual periods: Mechanical Amusement Park Period, 1921 – 1945; Post-War Modernization Period, 1946 – 1953; and Theme Park Period, 1954 – 1976.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

**Early History of the Lagoon Amusement Park**

Lagoon's first incarnation was as a beach resort called Lake Park on the edge of the Great Salt Lake three miles west of the city of Farmington in Davis County, Utah. Lake Park was built by the Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad midway between Ogden and Salt Lake City. Lake Park was partially owned by Simon Bamberger, a transportation magnate and governor of Utah from 1917 to 1920. Lake Park opened on July 15, 1886. The roundtrip train fare provided admission to dancing, roller skating, target shooting, a bowling alley, and a pleasure garden. One of the few mechanical amusements at Lake Park was a "Flying Jennie," a mule-powered circular ride with swinging seats.<sup>9</sup>

Only a few years after the opening of Lake Park, the waters of the fickle Great Salt Lake began to recede, leaving the resort beaches with a "sticky brand of blue mud" that spelled misery for bathers by the early 1890s.<sup>10</sup> In 1896, the owners moved the pavilions and attractions inland to a property at the western edge of Farmington. The new resort featured two artificial lagoons and was christened the Lagoon Summer Resort and Picnic Grounds. Lagoon opened on July 12, 1896. The 1898 Sanborn map of Lagoon shows the interurban Salt Lake & Ogden Railway line along the east side of the resort. At the beginning of the 1903 season, park owner Simon Bamberger raised its train and admission fare from 25 cents to 50 cents in order to attract "only the best class of patronage" and actively promoted the Lagoon's "beautiful grounds" with its shade trees, flowers, grass, gardens, and cool temperatures in an effort to distinguish the resort from its lakeside rivals.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, June 19, 1887: 6.

<sup>10</sup> John S. McCormick and Nancy D. McCormick, *Saltair*, (Salt Lake City, Utah: University of Utah Press, 1985): 14-15.

<sup>11</sup> *Saltair*: 73; *Salt Lake Herald*, April 21, 1903: 5; *Salt Lake Herald*, August 17, 1903: 5-6.

**Lagoon Flying Scooter**

Name of Property

**Davis County, Utah**

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By 1910, Bamberger completed the conversion of his interurban railroad from steam to electricity with the Lagoon station the most popular destination during the summer between Memorial Day and Labor Day. In the first decade of the 1900s, the management installed a collection of mechanical amusement park rides near the north end of the lagoon area: a miniature railroad, a merry-go-round, a joy wheel, bump-the-bumps, shoot-the-chutes, and a scenic railway. By the second decade, the amusement park included a full midway, a funhouse, bumper cars, and a Waikiki Beach-themed cement swimming pool.<sup>12</sup>

By the early 1910s, America was fascinated by the flying machines that emerged from the experiments of the Wright brothers and others. On October 11, 1914, Lagoon sponsored an exhibition race between an automobile and an aeroplane that thrilled over 2,000 spectators.<sup>13</sup> But the real money was in providing park patrons with the more visceral thrill of a flying ride. For the 1919 season, Lagoon built its tallest amusement device, the Captive Aeroplanes, which was pronounced the “sensation of the season.”<sup>14</sup> Lagoon’s ride was a successor to the simple Flying Jenny of the previous generation. Around the turn-of-the-twentieth-century, there were dozens of patents filed for similar “circular swings” amusement devices consisting of tall towers with gondolas attached to cables for the riders.<sup>15</sup> Within a few years, many of the gondolas had been replaced by mock airplanes, including a famous example at the 1915 San Francisco World’s Fair. Lagoon’s version of the Captive Aeroplanes, built circa 1918-1919, consisted of an approximately 60-foot iron tower and four airplanes that swung out over the lagoon.<sup>16</sup>

**History of the Lagoon Flying Scooter**

Anthon C. Christensen served as the assistant manager of Lagoon between 1908 and 1916, and the general manager between 1917 and 1927. Christensen traveled frequently to other amusement parks on the east and west coasts, and became one of the first amusement park professionals in the state.<sup>17</sup> It was during his tenure in the 1920s that the Lagoon Resort was first referred to as the Lagoon Amusement Park.<sup>18</sup> Christensen purchased park attractions from nationally-known designers and manufacturers, such as a Herschell-Spillman carousel in 1918 and a John A. Miller-designed roller coaster in 1921. His successor, Simon Bamberger’s son, Julian M. Bamberger, was responsible for, not only keeping the park open through the depression years, but transforming the resort into a modern amusement park by the late 1930s. Julian Bamberger kept up the tradition of adding at least one new attraction each year. For the May 30th opening of the 1941 season, Bamberger found one of the most unique amusement park rides of the first half of the twentieth century, the Flying Scooter.

The Flying Scooter was first designed by Alvin Bisch in 1934. By 1939, Bisch and his partner, Ralph Rocco, had incorporated under the name Bisch-Rocco Amusement Company, and were selling the ride throughout the United States.<sup>19</sup> Lagoon purchased an early version of the ride, known as the “stationary” model with “streamlined” cars, as

<sup>12</sup> Description and installation dates for some of these rides can be found in the Multiple Property Documentation form for Lagoon.

<sup>13</sup> Thirty-five separate exhibitions by aviator, Lincoln Beachey, and driver, Barney Oldfield, were held all over the country in 1914.

<sup>14</sup> *Salt Lake Telegram*, June 25, 1919: 5.

<sup>15</sup> These rides may have been influenced by the work of the Smithsonian’s Samuel Pierpont Langley, who tested the lift power of early air machines by suspending them from cables “something on the order of a merry go round with a whirling post in the center.” *Salt Lake Herald*, September 26, 1909: 4.

<sup>16</sup> The designer and manufacturer of the Lagoon ride are unknown. The ride was partially damaged by wind in January 1920. In a letter to a local newspaper, Mr. A. B. de Villentroy, a photographer and French immigrant living in Salt Lake City, claimed to be the owner of the ride and assured the public it was being safely repaired. *Salt Lake Telegram*, January 10, 1920: 3.

<sup>17</sup> *Davis County Clipper*, October 21, 1921: 1. Christensen served as a director of the National Association of Amusement Parks.

<sup>18</sup> Both names were used interchangeably and intermittently depending on the source during the period between 1920s and the 1960s.

<sup>19</sup> More information on Alvin Bisch, Ralph Rocco, and the Bisch-Rocco Amusement Company can be found in the developmental history/additional context section below.



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described in a circa 1939 company brochure.<sup>20</sup> The management of Lagoon was likely impressed by the selling points: “Always in Top Money!” and “100% Safety Record!” But it was the assertion that “Every Car has Individual Flying Control,” which set the device apart from numerous other amusement park rides on the market, a claim that the makers of the ever popular roller coaster could not make. A skilled rider in the Flying Scooter could make the scooter car dive downward or swoop upward at will.

Lagoon’s Flying Scooter was first installed approximately 100 feet east of the current location of the carousel. It was the first and remains the only Flying Scooter permanently installed in Utah.<sup>21</sup> Lagoon advertised its new ride as “the nearest approach to flying a plane without leaving the confines of the earth” and “the amusement thrill of the year.”<sup>22</sup> A tri-fold Lagoon brochure produced for the 1941 season included a photograph of delighted riders and the words: “Ride, Dive, Slide, Slip, the New Flying Scooters. Like a Real Plane! You Control the Rudder.”<sup>23</sup> The ride was extremely popular through the 1941 and 1942 seasons. By 1942 the ride was more than simply thrilling, it was also “a spine tingling ride.”<sup>24</sup> A black & white photograph of a scooter car taken on July 4, 1942, indicates that the first cars were painted a light color with a star-circle design on the rudder. Lagoon’s initial investment in the Flying Scooter appeared to be short-lived. When the scooter cars were removed for winter storage in the fall of 1942, they remained there for 3½ years. The Lagoon resort, along with nearly all of Utah’s recreational venues, experienced a dark (non-operating) period between 1943 and 1945, due to a scarcity of gasoline, materials, and labor during World War II.

By early 1946, the Lagoon Amusement Park was filled with weeds and the rides were falling apart. The Bamberger family had lost interest in running the park and considered razing it, but agreed to lease it to entrepreneurs Ranch Kimball and the Freed brothers, Robert, David, Daniel, and Peter, who came home from the war looking for a project.<sup>25</sup> Under the name Utah Amusement Corporation, the partners spruced up the park in time for a 1946 season opening and added nine new attractions in time to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the park in 1947. One of the modifications for 1947 was the replacement of the “old circle swing” captive aeroplanes with sleek, stainless steel rocket ships that could hold eight adults or twelve children.<sup>26</sup> On May 16, 1952, gale force winds at Lagoon “did about \$500 damage to lighting signs and destroyed two flying scooter cars,” but did not interfere with the park’s opening.<sup>27</sup> Replacements were likely shipped from the Bisch-Rocco Amusement Company within a few weeks.<sup>28</sup> At the end of that season, on September 6, 1952, the electric passenger railroad made its final stop at the Lagoon station. When the rail company shut down operations completely, the *Salt Lake Tribune* published this eulogy: “The Bamberger Railroad died yesterday, the victim of a ‘collision’ with the family automobile.”<sup>29</sup>

On the night of November 14, 1953, as an orange glow appeared on the mountains to the east, Farmington residents got in their cars and parked along the highway to watch as half of the Lagoon Amusement Park burned to the ground. The fire destroyed the west side of the midway, the dance pavilion, the fun house, and the front portion of the roller coaster. The carousel was charred, but eventually saved by fireman continuously dousing it with water throughout the night. With only partial insurance, the park began an ambitious program of rebuilding with a \$500,000 investment for the 1954

<sup>20</sup> “Flying Scooters” trade brochure produced by Bisch-Rocco Amusement Company, [Chicago, Illinois: circa 1939]. Digital copy courtesy of the Flyer Addicts Research Blog ([www.flyeraddicts.com](http://www.flyeraddicts.com)). The Stationary Model was also known as the Park Model. The streamlined tubs were more rounded than the box-like tubs produced for the prototype and a few early models.

<sup>21</sup> The company introduced a portable model in the early 1940s and it is possible that some of these may have operated briefly at county fairs or traveling carnivals in the state.

<sup>22</sup> *Salt Lake Telegram*, May 29, 1941: 8.

<sup>23</sup> Advertisement, 1941, digital copy courtesy of the Lagoon Corporation.

<sup>24</sup> *Salt Lake Telegram*, May 29, 1942: 6.

<sup>25</sup> After several years of serving as the President of Lagoon, Ranch Kimball gave up his managerial interest in the park in 1970. *Deseret News*, January 26, 1980.

<sup>26</sup> *Davis County Clipper*, April 25, 1947.

<sup>27</sup> *Salt Lake Telegram*, May 16, 1952: 1.

<sup>28</sup> It is not known whether the ride operated with missing cars and or if the replacements were identical in design.

<sup>29</sup> *Salt Lake Tribune*, January 1, 1959. The railroad continued with limited passenger service from Ogden to Hill Air Force Base in the 1950s and some freight service through December 1958.

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season. Lagoon's phoenix-like opening took place on May 1, 1954. The scooter cars were in storage, and the tower was not damaged during the fire. A May 13, 1954 news article featured a photograph of an operating scooter car painted a dark color with white stripes.<sup>30</sup> For the 1956 season, five acres were devoted to the first themed section of the park, a kiddie-ride area known as Mother Goose Land. The Flying Scooter was moved from its original location, now the center of Mother Goose Land, to a new location south of the roller coaster loading station.<sup>31</sup>

The Lagoon Flying Scooter stayed in the same location at the south end of the midway from 1956 until 1982. During that time, the ride remained essentially the same, but underwent several enhancements. The entire scooter car assembly was replaced by the Bisch-Rocco company, which had stopped making rounded tubs and was exclusively using the box-style tubs. The original canvas rudder and stabilizer, which had several layers of paint by the 1950s, were also replaced. The new scooter assembly represented the Bisch-Rocco Amusement Company's most popular state-of-the-art model at the time. The refurbished scooter cars were painted white, with red and blue accents. In the spring of 1972, the Flying Jets was repainted to "resemble the World War I Flying Aces. The Red Baron, The Sopwith Camel and others are represented and the ride has been renamed The Flying Aces."<sup>32</sup>

In 1982, Lagoon decided to build an outdoor amphitheater for musical shows. The chosen location was just south of the roller coaster, where Flying Scooter riders had spent nearly thirty years skimming the tops of the trees on the ride's perimeter. At the end of the 1982 season, the Flying Aces was disassembled for storage. During the time the ride was on hiatus, the Freed family, under the name Lagoon Corporation, purchased the amusement park from the Bamberger family.<sup>33</sup> The return of the Flying Aces at a new location at the north end of the midway occurred in time for the 1986 season opening. The scooter cars were painted in primary colors with new hardware attaching them to the frames. In 1998, the ride was moved approximately 100 feet southeast to a former picnic lawn so that 207-foot Rocket tower ride could be built. The Flying Aces has operated at its current location since 1999. In 2001, the scooter cars were sanded and painted with their current individual colors; however, the names of the biplanes were left off.<sup>34</sup> Lagoon received numerous comments about the missing names, and within a year, the names had been repainted on the rudders.<sup>35</sup> The Flying Aces continues to be one of the most popular lower-volume rides at Lagoon today.

The Lagoon Flying Scooter is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and is significant in the area of Entertainment/Recreation as the third oldest ride at the Lagoon Amusement Park. In Gary Kyriazi's history of American amusement parks published in 1976, Lagoon was described as "one of those older amusement parks which through constant renovation somewhat resembles a modern theme park, although it is basically traditional."<sup>36</sup> The history of Lagoon's amusement park rides parallels the cultural interests of its patrons through the years. For example, in 1919, the Captive Aeroplanes ride captured the imagination of a public fascinated by the concept of flight. By 1947, when air travel was commonplace, the mock aeroplanes were replaced with stainless-steel rockets. For Lagoon's 100th anniversary in 1987, in the age of routine space travel, the Rockets ride was replaced by the Turn of the Century, a 48-seat version of a musical Flying Jenny. Most recently for the 2012 season, Lagoon had added yet another flight-themed ride, the Air Race. The significance of the Flying Scooter is a bridge from one era to the other. Whether they remember it as the Flying Scooter, Jets, or Aces, most of Lagoon's patrons have no idea the ride is over seventy-years old. The ride with the biplane theme still looks very modern. What is more important is that having control over the ride experience is a concept that most people, including the inventor, would agree is timeless.

<sup>30</sup> *Deseret News*, May 13, 1954: 8. It is not known precisely when the cars were painted, but probably between 1946 and 1954.

<sup>31</sup> The Rock-O-Plane was installed near the coaster as a new ride in 1954, but was later moved to its current location on the west side of the lagoon.

<sup>32</sup> *Provo Daily Herald*, March 19, 1972: 5-A.

<sup>33</sup> The company was later reorganized as the Lagoon Investment Company.

<sup>34</sup> *Deseret News*, February 23, 2001: C-1.

<sup>35</sup> "Flying Aces" at [www.lagoonisfun.com](http://www.lagoonisfun.com).

<sup>36</sup> Gary Kyriazi, *The Great American Amusement Parks: A Pictorial History*, (Secaucus, N.J.: Citadel Press, 1976): 253.

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**Developmental history/additional historic context information** (if appropriate)

**The Bisch-Rocco Amusement Company and the Flying Scooter**

The Lagoon Flying Scooter is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and is significant in the areas of Invention, Engineering, and Entertainment/Recreation for its association with the work of the Bisch-Rocco Amusement Company. It is the first amusement park ride of its kind to be nominated to the National Register, and the first to represent the important contributions of Alvin Bisch and Ralph Rocco to the amusement park industry.

Alvin Bisch was born on January 28, 1888, in Bridgeport, Ontario, Canada. He spent time (and registered for the draft) in both the United States and Canada, where his occupation was mechanic and chauffeur. Alvin Bisch eventually settled in the Chicago area after his marriage to Ada M. Dargert in 1920. Alvin and Ada Bisch had three children. On the 1930 census enumeration, Alvin Bisch listed his occupation as a garage mechanic. Like many mechanics of his time, his tinkering led him to the patent office. In 1929, he filed two patents: one for an “air-pilot-training-device” that the operator could in theory “guide, dip, dive, or bank” an “airplane” attached to a rotating structure; and a second patent for a device similar to a circle swing with four planes that Bisch posited could be used “to train aviators or for amusement purposes.”<sup>37</sup> Although never built, Alvin Bisch was photographed in 1930 with a scale model for a four-plane device in *Modern Mechanics*, a magazine for inventors. All through his experimentation, Bisch strived for the perfect rider-controlled device. With a patent filed on July 21, 1934, and approved five years later on January 3, 1939, Bisch finally found a working design that could deliver on the promise of a “revolving cab [that] may deviate from its normal path by the control within the hands of the operator.” Patent #2142169 for a tub with rear stabilizer and pivoting front rudder did not resemble an actual airplane in a sense of the word, but Bisch probably didn’t care. With this patent, he had also narrowed his focus to a particular market. The design was labeled simply “amusement device.”

It was around this time that Alvin Bisch started a partnership with Ralph Rocco, another Chicago area auto mechanic. Ralph Rocco was born in Italy on December 19, 1891. His family immigrated to the United States in 1902. He worked in the stock yards before becoming a mechanic in the 1920s. He is listed living with his wife Anna, his children, and a brother on the 1930 census of Chicago. The partners organized the Bisch-Rocco Amusement Company around the time the first prototype scooter ride was installed at Chicago’s Riverview Park in 1935. On February 6, 1939, Alvin Bisch filed a patent for an improved design for his “amusement device.” Patent #2163360 was approved on June 20, 1939, and was the essential design for what became the company’s Park (Stationary) Model: a pyramidal tower, ten-boom assembly, and three-piece scooter car. A shop drawing produced by structural engineer, W. Bermann, for the Bisch-Rocco Amusement Company in December 1937 shows a few enhancements on the tower design of the patent.<sup>38</sup> By the time the ride was installed in the amusement area of the Golden Gate International Exposition in San Francisco in 1939, the name on the ticket was the Flying Scooter. The publicity surrounding the ride’s appearance at various fairs and expositions may have brought the ride to the attention of Lagoon’s management.<sup>39</sup> The Bisch-Rocco Company also advertised the Flying Scooter and other rides in *Billboard*, the trade magazine for the amusement industry.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> The first device (#1791655) was patented on February 10, 1931, the second (#1912174) on May 30 1933. The third (#1906443) for a similar device was patented on May 2, 1933.

<sup>38</sup> The shop drawing (#3) was part of a set given to the Lagoon management when the flying scooter was installed. The drawing is labeled Job #3709 (probably the ninth job of the year). The 1937 job date may mean that Lagoon had acquired a partially used ride in 1941. It is not known what happened to the remaining drawings. The draftsman was probably William Bermann, a Swedish immigrant and civil engineer, living in Chicago in 1930.

<sup>39</sup> The ride was also featured at the Canadian National Exposition of 1939 and the Great Lakes Exposition in Cleveland 1936-1937.

<sup>40</sup> *Billboard* magazine was established in 1894 and represented the amusement industry until 1961 when it transitioned to representing mostly jukeboxes and the music industry.

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Around 1939, the Bisch-Rocco Amusement Company had produced a two-color, four-page brochure for the ride. Alvin Bisch's daughter, June, was photographed for the front cover riding in a scooter car with a friend. The brochure contained several photographs of crowds lining up near the ride that was described as "Entertaining to Ride and Amusing to Watch." According to the brochure, the scooter was breaking records, taking in \$927.90 in a single day." If normal takes were even close to "\$12,647.90 in 10 consecutive days" the company boasted, the ride would more than pay for itself after only one season of weekend operation. The brochure also claimed of "the millions that have ridden Flying Scooters there has never been on single accident," including a ninety-one year-old man and mothers with babies in their arms.

On the 1940 census, Alvin Bisch, the inventor, listed his occupation as "Mechanical Engineer, Manufacturer of Amusement Park Rides." His daughter June was a clerk for the company.<sup>41</sup> Ralph Rocco, who became the spokesperson for the company, was perhaps not ready to give up his day job in 1940. He gave his occupation as proprietor of an auto repair shop.<sup>42</sup> Ralph Rocco later embraced his engineering skills and was featured in the 1954 edition of *Who's Who in Engineering?* By the time the company was in full manufacturing mode, the scooter tubs had been "streamlined" to a more rounded shape than the prototype box-style tubs. The tubs were made of duramold, a composite material made from birch and resin. The first stabilizers and rudders were canvas. While the company boasted that the entire ride could be loaded onto one truck, they also developed a portable model in the early 1940s with a low-profile tower structure based on Bisch's 1934 patent. Production was probably nonexistent during World War II, but after the war Bisch-Rocco recycled surplus aviation fuel tanks that resulted in longer rounded tubs.<sup>43</sup> When fuel tanks were no longer available, the company reverted to the original look of the box-style tubs, but sturdier with better production qualities. The post-war box-style tubs are found on the majority of currently operating Flying Scooters.

In the late 1940s, the Bisch-Rocco company also produced other rides, such as the Flying Disk and a Kiddie Jet ride, one of which was purchased by the Lagoon Amusement Park in 1949.<sup>44</sup> By the late 1950s, the company was producing fewer full rides, but still doing a good business in upgrades and replacement parts. Alvin Bisch died in November 1965 and Ralph Rocco died ten years later in June 1975. With the death of the principals, the company faded into obscurity. In 2003, the ride experienced a renaissance when Larson International, Inc. bought the rights and a working model of the Bisch-Rocco Flying Scooter. After a few structural and safety revisions, Larson began producing new Flying Scooters that have been installed all over the country.<sup>45</sup> Of the twenty-four currently operating flying scooters, ten are the newer Larson models. In 2004, a group of Flying Scooter enthusiasts organized *Flyer Addicts Anonymous* with the mission document the history of and promote the continuing operation of Flying Scooter rides.

The *Flyers Addicts* have documented twelve historic rides currently operating, three in storage, two standing-but-not-operating, and ninety-three defunct flying scooters. Six of the currently operating historic rides are portable 8-tub models, two of which have retained the name Flying Scooter.<sup>46</sup> The Lagoon Flying Scooter is one of six operating 10-tub Park Models. The Lagoon example does not have the most original components (three have older tub designs and at least

<sup>41</sup> June's future husband, Donald H. Parkerson Jr., also worked for the company in the 1940s, as did her younger brother, Alvin G. Bisch.

<sup>42</sup> Chris Clark, *Flying Scooter Historian*, Correspondence and Notes.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> *The Billboard Outdoor Equipment Review*, April 9, 1949: 14. It is unclear whether this ride was actually installed at Lagoon. It does not appear labeled on the 1950 Sanborn map and is not listed with the rides damaged by the fire in 1953.

<sup>45</sup> The Premier Rides Company has produced at least one new flying scooter. The Martin & Vieminckx Rides LLC, an amusement park ride construction company, is also credited with one.

<sup>46</sup> The total does not include possible examples of portable models that are only in operation a few days out of a year. The only currently documented example is owned by the Wichita County Fair in Kansas.

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two have older stabilizer-rudders), but Lagoon's Flying Scooter is the oldest existing ride to be in continuous operation in the same amusement park.<sup>47</sup>

The Lagoon Flying Scooter is perhaps the best representative of the Bisch-Rocco Amusement Company as an example of the continuity of design from the company's early pre-war production model to a meticulously maintained upgrade using the best of Bisch-Rocco's post-war replacement components. The Bisch-Rocco product was promoted in the 1939 company brochure as "constructed with the best known materials," "low maintenance" and "few wearing parts." The Lagoon example is proof of durability for a ride that is over seventy years-old. But the Flying Scooter has endured and even increased in popularity because of the inventiveness of its engineering. In the words of the Bisch-Rocco Amusement Company: "The Colorful Ride With Lots of Snap" continues to give the rider self-control and the ability to "sail and climb and dive through the air," proving the thrill of the ride that "never grows old."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> The second oldest Park Model is the Hurricane in Denver, Colorado (early 1940s). The Butterfly in North Little Rock, Arkansas, is the oldest permanent installation of a portable model.

<sup>48</sup> "Flying Scooters" trade brochure, circa 1939: [4].

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)  
☐ previously listed in the National Register  
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register  
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark  
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_  
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

☒ State Historic Preservation Office  
☐ Other State agency  
☐ Federal agency  
☐ Local government  
☐ University  
☐ Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 0.17 acres

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 1/2  
Zone Easting Northing

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

**Latitude:** 40.987110 **Longitude:** -111.893319

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundaries of the Lagoon Flying Scooter include everything within the fenced area around the perimeter of the ride, including the waiting area.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries are those current associated with the property since 1999.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Korral Broschinsky, Preservation Documentation Resource

organization prepared for the Lagoon Amusement Park date June 21, 2012

street & number 4874 Taylors Park Drive telephone 801-913-5645

city or town Taylorsville state Utah zip code 84123

e-mail k.broschinsky@att.net

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

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**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Lagoon Flying Scooter  
City or Vicinity: Farmington  
County: Davis State: Utah  
Photographer: Korral Broschinsky  
Date Photographed: 2011-2012



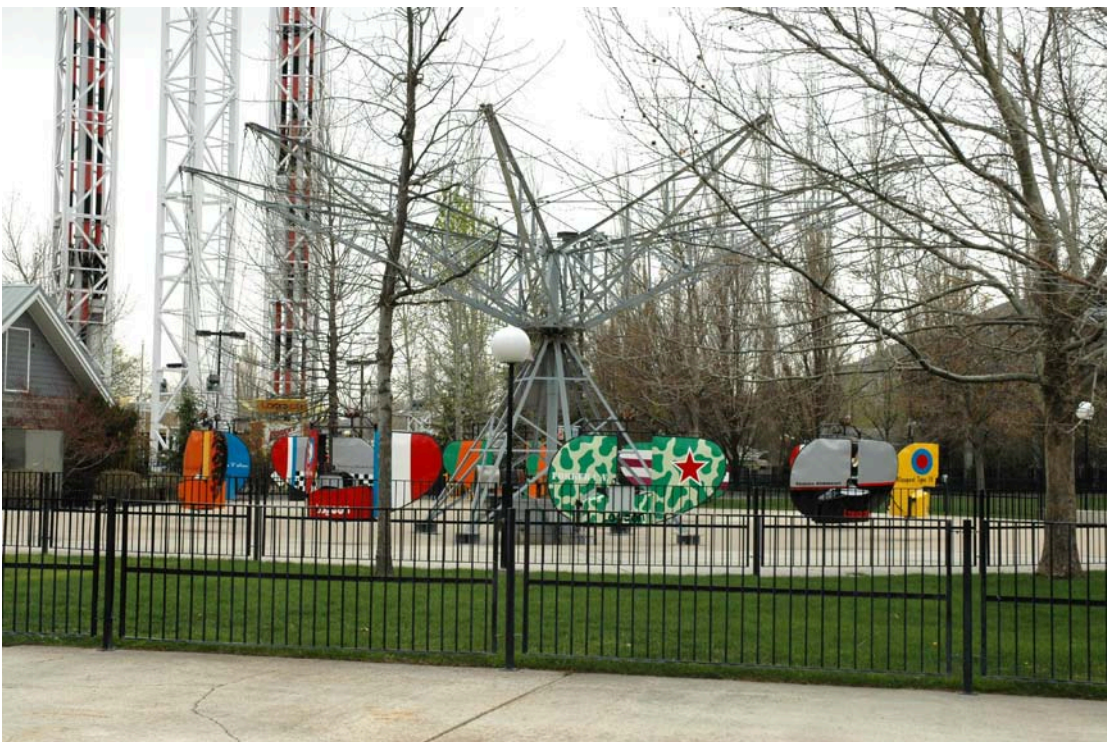
**Lagoon Flying Scooter**

Name of Property

**Davis County, Utah**

County and State

Description of Photograph(s) and number:





**Lagoon Flying Scooter**

Name of Property

**Davis County, Utah**

County and State



**Lagoon Flying Scooter**

Name of Property

**Davis County, Utah**

County and State



**Lagoon Flying Scooter**

Name of Property

**Davis County, Utah**

County and State

**Property Owner:**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Lagoon Investment Company (Contact: David W. Freed)  
street & number 375 N. Lagoon Drive telephone 801-451-8000  
city or town Farmington state Utah zip code 84025

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.